

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended) A method of handling sod having grass blades projecting upwardly therefrom, comprising providing a clamp having first and second opposing clamp ~~side members~~ surfaces at least one of which is moveable toward the other to press directly against the other clamp ~~side member~~surface, gripping at least an upper portion of said sod between said opposing clamp ~~side members~~surfaces, and moving said clamp with said sod suspended from said clamp.

Claim 2 (currently amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said clamp clamps at least some of said grass blades by contacting such grass blades with said clamp surfaces and pressing such grass blades between said clamp ~~side members~~surfaces.

Claim 3 (original) A method according to claim 1 wherein said sod has thatch, and said clamp clamps said thatch.

Claim 4 (original) A method according to claim 1 wherein said sod has a base comprising a soil portion containing roots, and said clamp grips an upper part of said soil portion.

Claim 5 (previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein at least two said clamps are used.

Claim 6 (original) A method according to claim 5 and including the steps of lowering said clamps onto said sod with said clamps open, closing said clamps to grip said sod, lifting said clamps to raise said sod, and then moving said clamps to move said sod.

Claim 7 (original) A method according to claim 5 including raising said sod on a support towards said clamps with said clamps open, closing said clamps to grip said sod, lowering said support leaving said sod suspended from said clamps, and then moving said clamps with said sod suspended therefrom.

Claim 8 (original) A method according to claim 5 and including the steps of lowering said clamps toward said sod with said clamps open and raising said sod on a support toward said clamps, closing said clamps to grip said sod, and moving said clamps and said support away from each other with said sod suspended from said clamps.

Claim 9 (original) Apparatus for picking up sod of the kind having grass blades projecting upwardly therefrom, said apparatus comprising at least one clamp having an open and a closed condition, and a mechanism for opening and closing said clamp, a support mechanism for moving at least one of said sod and said clamp towards the other at a first location for at least said grass blades to enter into said clamp when said clamp is in its open condition, and a carrying mechanism for moving said clamp, with said sod slab suspended therefrom, to another location.

Claim 10 (original) Apparatus according to claim 9 and including at least two said clamps.

Claim 11 (original) Apparatus according to claim 10 wherein each clamp has a pair of side members which are spaced apart in the open condition of said clamps and which have gripping portions which press towards each other when said clamps are closed.

Claim 12 (original) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein the gripping portion of one side member of said clamp slants toward the other side member of said clamp.

Claim 13 (original) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein the gripping portions of both side members of said clamp slant toward the other side member of said clamp.

Claim 14 (original) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein said side members of said clamps are formed of thin metal to facilitate penetration into the thatch and soil of said sod slab.

Claim 15 (original) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein one side member of said clamp is fixed and said mechanism for opening and closing said clamp moves the other side member of said clamp.

Claim 16 (original) Apparatus according to claim 15 and including springs to bias said other side member of said clamp to a closed position.

Claim 17 (original) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein said side members of said clamp are hinged to each other.

Claim 18 (original) Apparatus according to claim 15 wherein said other side member of said clamp is mounted for linear movement towards and away from said one side member of said clamp.

Claim 19 (original) Apparatus according to any of claim 11 wherein each side member of said clamp includes teeth on a lower edge thereof.

Claim 20 (original) Apparatus according to claim 9 wherein said clamp comprises a pair of screens.

Claim 21 (original) Apparatus according to claim 9 wherein said clamp comprises a screen having openings for said grass blades to project therethrough, and a plate located above said screen to clamp said grass blades between said screen and said plate.

Claim 22 (original) Apparatus according to claim 10 and including a cut-off blade to divide said sod slab into at least two pieces, said cut-off blade in use having a cutting edge which is oriented at an angle to said sod slab such that one portion of said cut-off blade enters said sod slab before another portion of said cut-off blade enters said sod slab, thus to reduce the force needed for said cut-off blade to cut said sod.

Claim 23 (original) A method of cutting sod using a cutting knife having a cutting edge extending from a first end of said cutting knife to a second end of said cutting knife, said method comprising orienting said cutting knife so that said cutting edge is slanted with respect to the sod to be cut, such that said first end of said cutting knife enters said sod before said second end of said cutting knife enters said sod, thus to reduce the force needed for said cutting knife to cut said sod.

Claim 24 (original) The method according to claim 23 and including supporting said sod to be cut on two conveyors having a space between them, said space being aligned with said cutting knife for said cutting knife in use to enter said space.

Claim 25 (previously presented) A method according to claim 5 and including the steps of moving at least one of said clamps, and said sod, toward the other of said clamps and said sod, with said clamps open, and then closing said clamps to grip said sod, and then moving said clamps with said sod suspended therefrom to move said sod.

Claim 26 (currently amended) A method of handling sod having grass blades projecting upwardly therefrom, comprising pressing opposing clamp surfaces directly against each other to gripping said grass blades between them and then suspending said sod by said grass blades from said clamp surfaces, and then moving said sod with said sod suspended by said grass blades.